to the notice of the Government of India where Sri Lankan Naval vessels have conducted raids on Indian fishing vessels operating within Indian territorial waters.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Celebration of Birth Anniversary of Veer Savarkar

*170. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposal to celebrate the anniversary of Veer Savarkar, a prominent freedom fighter;

(b) if so, what action is beng contemplated by Government in this regard;

(c) whether Government have provided/propose to provide financial assistance to voluntary organisations for celebrating the birth anniversary of Veer Savarkar;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if the reply to part (a) above be in the negative, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Government had provided financial assistance in favour of Veer Savarkar Janam Shati Samaroh Samiti, Varanasi for 103rd and 106th birth anniversary of Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 20,000 respectively. Provision for anniversary celebrations is discontinued. Grants sanctioned during the current year are restricted to centenaries/jubilees.

Disposal of cases by the Central Administrative Tribunals

*171. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the very objective of the setting up of Central Administrative Tribunals was to dispose of a case within 180 days and with minimum expenses of the parties;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that these objectives have proved to be a failure in so far as the Central Administrative Tribunal, Calcutta Bench is concerned; and

(c) if so, what corrective steps are proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH): (a) The objective of setting up of the Central Administrative Tribunal which deals exclusively with the service matters of the Central Government employees, was to reduce the burden of various Courts (Subordinate|High Courts) and render speedy and inexpensive relief in respect of their grievances. Though there is no specific provision in the Administrative Tribunal Act, 1985 (13 of 1985) regarding the disposal of a case within 180 days of its institution, Rule 14(2) of the CAT(Procedure) Rules, 1987, provides that every application shall be heard and decided *as far as possibble* within six months from the date of its registration. A nominal fee of Rs. 50/ only is required to be paid by a Government servant for filing an application before the Tribunal. It is not obligatory for him to engage a practising lawyer as he himself can defend his case before the Tribunal.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The various benches of the C.A.T. have been adjudicating a large number of pend

ing cases transferred from various High Courts and Subordinate Courts in addition to fresh cases instituted. As the average time taken for disposal of cases by the C.A.T. is comparatively shorter than was taken earlier by various Courts and the cost of litigation is low, the objective of setting up of CAT including its Calcutta Bench has been achieved substantially. With a view to speed up disposal of cases and reduce the pendency of cases before various benches of CAT, besides holding of circuit sittings at various places, the Government have decided to set up additional/new benches of the C.A.T. The procedure rules for Administrative Tribunals are also reviewed and amendments are brought about with a view to improve the working of the Tribunals.

Army Deserters joining terrorists in Punjab

*172. SHRI G. G. SWELL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of army deserters following the Operation Blue Star and some regular army men have joined the terrorists in Punjab;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether any steps have been taken to stop the drain of army personnel into the terrorist outfits in Punjab?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DR. RAJA RAMANNA): (a) and (b) According to available information only two Sepoys (of the lakhs of serving Army personnel) and a small number of Army deserters have joined the terrorist ranks.

(c) Appropriate steps have been taken to safeguard the Services personnel from falling prey to the nefarious designs of the terroist groups and hostile agencies.

National fund for afforestation and wastelands development

*173. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up a National Fund for Afforestation and Wastelands Development in the country;

(b) if so what is the total amount likely to be spent during the current year and who would administer the said Fund; and

(c) what are the details of the proposed projects and Programmes to be undertaken in the country this year particularly in Orissa and Rajasthan to use Wastelands and restoration of ecological balance?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NILAMANI ROUTRAY): (a) The National Fund for Afforestation and Wastelands Development has been set up by Government Resolution No. 6.1.12/90-MM-VI dated 17th July, 1990, issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. A copy of the Resolution is attached as Annexure.

(b) and (c) The Fund will be managed by a Committee as given in Annexure. The total amount to be spent and the projects to be undertaken from the Fund during the current year would depend on the contributions and donations to the Fund, which will be received in the future. Hence, details in this regard cannot be given at this stage.